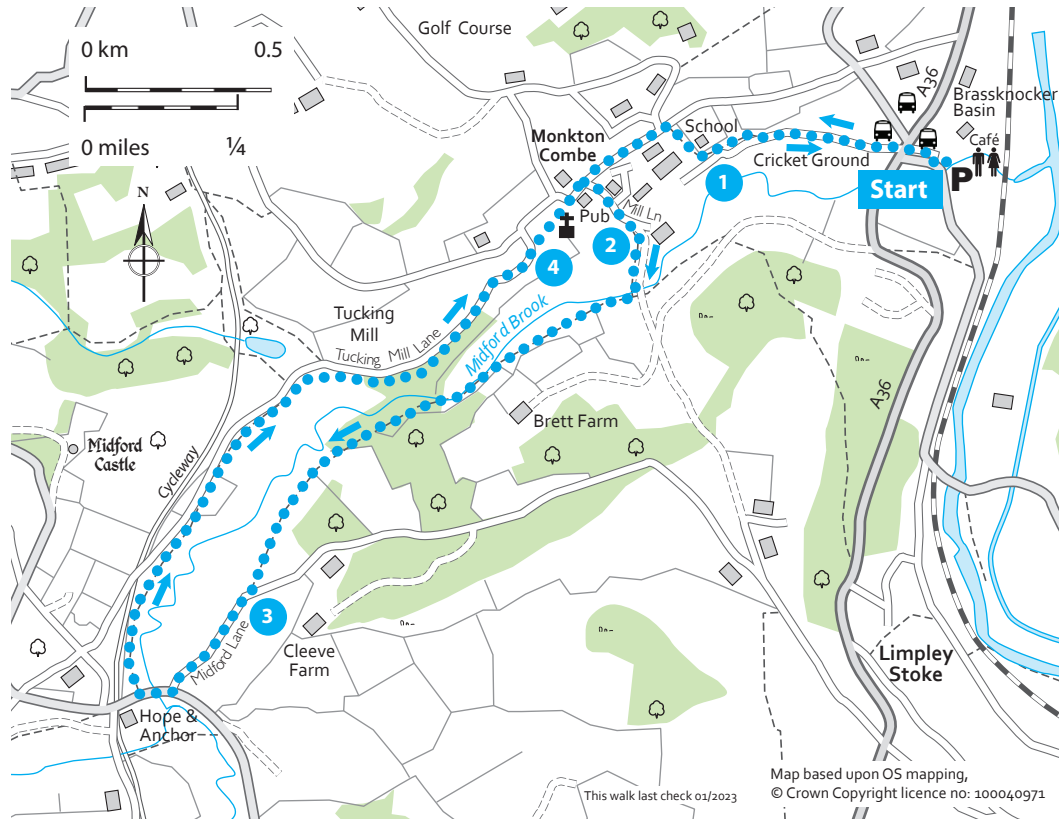


Walk 13 Light and shade along the Midford Brook

A beautiful flat walk through the countryside of south Bath along the babbling Midford Brook. One side offers woodland and shade and the other meadows and views up to Midford Castle.

Route



Start & Finish: Brassknocker Basin car park

*W3W - boil.spot.gear

Distance: 4 miles / 6.4 km with an up and down of 769 ft / 2354 m

Slopes: None

Steps & stiles: Steps through Monkton School, other steps on walk, no stiles

Terrain: Unpaved paths and minor roads. Can be VERY muddy in the winter. Best avoided after wet weather.

Transport: Visit travelinesw.com. Bus stops on Brassknocker Hill and Warminster Road. Look for the pedestrian gate to safely navigate down to the start rather than walking on the road. There are also bus stops in Monkton Combe village. Pay and display car parking. Note car park is locked in the evenings.

Public toilets: The Canal Centre

Refreshments: The Angelfish Café, Wheelwrights Arms in Monkton Combe, The Hope & Anchor Pub at Midford

Rest points: No formal stop points.

Dogs welcome: Yes, though livestock can be in the fields and some lane walking so please be prepared to put them on a lead.

Wheel friendly: No

Features on the route: Grade II Listed Building - Monkton Combe Lock-up, The Midford Brook, Midford Castle, Somersetshire Coal Canal, St. Michael's Church and Sir Harry Patch's Grave.

Head out of the car park main entrance towards Lower Stoke, but before meeting the main road, turn immediately right into a lane. Walk under the old railway arch and past the sports fields of Monkton Combe School on your left. *Note the cricket ground which was voted in the Wisden top three most picturesque cricket grounds in the country. A footpath does run alongside the pitches if you would like a closer look. It can be accessed by a set of steps from the lane.* Immediately after the sports fields, fork left onto a footpath, which runs parallel and slightly above the lane.

At the end turn right to cross the sunken lane and take the flight of steps opposite **1**. Continue uphill along the path between the school buildings. Keep within the fencing through the school grounds. When you reach a road turn left into Monkton Combe village.

Just before the Wheelwright Arms pub turn left down Mill Lane. Pass a little building on your left. *This is a lock-up built in 1776 to house local prisoners and is a Grade II Listed Building and was designated an Ancient Monument in 1953.* Continued on next page.

Walk 13 Light and shade along the Midford Brook

It was built away from the centre of the village, and is near the now disused Somersetshire Coal Canal which was under construction in the 1790s, and the Camerton Branch of the Bristol and North Somerset Railway line. The line was used to film the Titfield Thunderbolt, a 1953 British comedy film.

Continue down the road until it splits into a driveway on the left and path on the right beyond some metal barriers **2**. Take the path to continue down hill and over a wooden bridge, then down a fenced in path before a second wooden bridge which takes you over the Midford Brook. You are now in Wiltshire!

Just beyond this bridge, look for a wooden gate (with a metal cage) on your right. Pass through the gate into the field. Cattle are often grazing in this field. Walk along the field edge, with the brook on your right. Pass through a gateway into a second field until you meet a wooden gate next to a metal field gate. Go through the gate to continue alongside the brook on a more enclosed path.

Where the path forks, take the left fork slightly up hill, to stay on the public right of way, as signed. Pass through a metal kissing gate, taking care on the uneven path, and cross a couple of rustic wooden plank bridges before going through another metal gate to continue on the path.

Soon you will reach another metal gate into a field. Follow the path along the edge, still with the brook on your right, though a little further away now, pass through a gap into a second field and now start to look to your right and you will catch a glimpse of Midford Castle between the trees. Keep walking and a large gap soon offers you super views of this folly up on the hillside.

Midford Castle has a distinct trefoil shape and was constructed between 1733-1796 by Henry Woolhouse Disney Roebuck. Local legend suggests the shape is based on the Ace of Clubs. It was first opened to the public to raise money for local charities by retired solicitor Henry Whatley during and after WWII. He died at the castle aged 102 in 1957. Its most recent claim to fame is that in 2007 it was purchased by Hollywood actor Nicholas Cage who then had to sell it to help pay back tax arrears! Now it is a family home and at the time of writing the wine cellar was available to stay in as an AirBnB!

After enjoying the views, continue along the path to the metal kissing gate at the end of the field. Pass through, taking care as you exit onto a minor road (Midford Lane). Please take extra care on this stretch of road as it is often used as a cut through for local traffic **3**. Turn right and follow the road downhill until it meets the much busier Midford Road.

Turn right onto the pavement. Carefully cross the road before the pavement runs out. Cross the stone bridge. You will see an old mile stone set into the bridge. You are now crossing the Midford brook again, though it is much wider at this point than at the start of the walk. Once on the other side of the brook, before you reach the Hope and Anchor pub, cross back over the road again, taking care of the fast-moving traffic along this stretch. Look for the public footpath sign, and Circuit of Bath way mark, that points you to a footpath to the right of a stone wall between the houses.

From here you can follow the Circuit of Bath way markers all the way back to the start. The Circuit of Bath is a 20.5mile circular walk of the city. It can be walked in sections and routes guides, similar to

this one can be downloaded from the Bathscape and Cotswolds National Landscape websites. The way markers should guide you round to the right, along the side of a wooden fence. Then the footpath curves round to the left and up three small steps as it continues to run alongside the fence. The path then enters a woodland. On your left is the dry bed of the Somersetshire Coal Canal and the steep bank beyond it is awash with wild garlic in the spring. Look to the right and you will see where you have just walked with the brook between.

Continue on this woodland path, passing two large fallen beech trees and then crossing a tarmac track before passing through a wooden gate. Stay on the path through the woods, enjoying the views to your right. The path eventually pops out alongside a minor road (Tucking Mill Lane).

On the left you will see an attractive Bath stone cottage. *Look carefully for the plaque commemorating it as the house of William Smith, the 'Father of English Geology'. The plaque was originally erected in 1888 on the mill which was demolished in 1927. The plaque went missing at this time only to be rediscovered in the 1930s and placed upon the cottage. However, it is believed this was done mistakenly, and that William Smith actually lived in Tucking Mill House, which you will pass shortly.*

Continue along the path running parallel to Tucking Mill Lane until it pops out onto the lane itself. At this point look across the road and you will see Tucking Mill House, set back from the road.

Walk along Tucking Mill Lane, taking care for vehicles, but also cyclists as this is on Sustrans route 24. As the road curves sharply round to the left and steepens, look for a black metal gate in the stone wall on your right **4**. Go through the gate and into St. Michael's Churchyard.

Not far from the path on your right you will pass Sir Harry Patch's grave. He died in 2009 at the age of 111 and was the last surviving trench combat soldier of WWI. Though he was living in a nursing home in Wells when he died, he was born locally in Combe Down.

Continue through the churchyard, passing the church, until you reach the other side, where you will find yourself back in Monkton Combe village. Walk straight on down the main street, passing the Wheelwright Arms on your right. Continue to follow the Circuit of Bath way markers to retrace your footsteps back to the start.

Bathscape is a National Lottery Heritage Fund supported scheme overseen by a partnership of local organisations and led by Bath & North East Somerset Council. The Scheme was launched in October 2018 to promote better management and use of the Bathscape, the beautiful natural landscape surrounding the historic city of Bath. It delivers a range of projects, including practical volunteering, advice to landowners, meadow creation, learning and skill projects and encourages the active enjoyment of the landscape.

In addition to the Circuit of Bath the scheme promotes a range of shorter local walks, runs the annual Bathscape Walking Festival each September and a series of weekly walks throughout the year.

*W3W stands for What3Words, which is an alternative way of specifying precise locations. You can use the W3W app or website for free to see these locations on a map.